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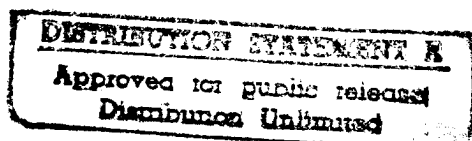
THE PRINCIPLES OF OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND THE FOG OF LIFE:
Why Some Succeed and Others Fail

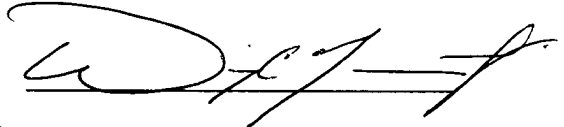
by


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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

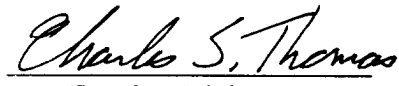
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 14 November 1997

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 May 15, 1997
Faculty Advisor Date
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19970814 132

DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 1

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1. Report Security Classification: UNCLASSIFIED			
2. Security Classification Authority:			
3. Declassification/Downgrading Schedule:			
4. Distribution/Availability of Report: DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.			
5. Name of Performing Organization: JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT			
6. Office Symbol: C		7. Address: NAVAL WAR COLLEGE 686 CUSHING ROAD NEWPORT, RI 02841-1207	
8. Title (Include Security Classification): THE PRINCIPLES OF OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND THE FOG OF LIFE: Why Some Succeed and Others Fail (U)			
9. Personal Authors: CDR. William C. Martin, Jr., USNR			
10. Type of Report: FINAL		11. Date of Report: 19 May 1997	
12. Page Count: 25			
13. Supplementary Notation: A paper submitted to the Faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the JMO Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.			
14. Ten key words that relate to your paper: Operational Leadership, Operational Art, General U.S. Grant, Civil War, Fort Donelson, Shiloh, The Wilderness, General Pillow, General Robert E. Lee, General Johnston, Operational Vision, Operational Decision Making			
15. Abstract: Warfighters must give increased attention to the study of leadership. Intuition and military superiority alone will not promise success. The study of Operational Leadership will illuminate those values that contribute to victory. Further, education and an understanding of history can best determine the course of action the Operational Commander should consider in preparing for hostilities. Aristotle notes that it is possible to reason correctly from false premises, thus coming up with logically correct, but untrue conclusions. To avoid this potential pitfall, a Commander must possess the precise knowledge of the Principles of Operational Leadership, and use these precepts correctly in order to secure success in future conflicts. This paper's approach towards Operational Leadership provides: a) The Principles of Operational Leadership; b) The historical examples of Operational Leadership through the case studies of three distinct battles during the Civil War involving General U. S. Grant, and; c) Describes how the acquired Principles of Operational Leadership and historical lessons must be cultivated in a stressful academic atmosphere, prior to being tested on the battlefield. This paper judges Grant's performance using the Principle's of Operational Leadership. This review and analysis of General Grant's Operational Leadership through a "window of history", offers a practical example for military leaders, to assist them in achieving their ultimate objective - victory. These practical examples from history and an education on the tenets of Operational Leadership, accomplished under a stressful regiment, can better guarantee success in tomorrow's conflicts.			
16. Distribution / Availability of Abstract:	Unclassified X	Same As Rpt	DTIC Users
17. Abstract Security Classification: UNCLASSIFIED			
18. Name of Responsible Individual: CHAIRMAN, JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT			
19. Telephone: 841-6461		20. Office Symbol: C	

Abstract of

The Principles of Operational Leadership and the Fog of Life: Why Some Succeed and Others Fail

Warfighters must give increased attention to the study of leadership. Intuition and military superiority alone will not promise success. The study of Operational Leadership will illuminate those values that contribute to victory. Further, education and an understanding of history can best determine the course of action the Operational Commander should consider in preparing for hostilities. Aristotle notes that it is possible to reason correctly from false premises, thus coming up with logically correct, but untrue conclusions. To avoid this potential pitfall, a Commander must possess the precise knowledge of the Principles of Operational Leadership, and use these precepts correctly in order to secure success in future conflicts. This paper's approach towards Operational Leadership provides: a) The Principles of Operational Leadership; b) The historical examples of Operational Leadership through the case studies of three distinct battles during the Civil War involving General U. S. Grant, and; c) Describes how the acquired Principles of Operational Leadership and historical lessons must be cultivated in a stressful academic atmosphere, prior to being tested on the battlefield. This paper judges Grant's performance using the Principle's of Operational Leadership. This review and analysis of General Grant's Operational Leadership through a "window of history", offers a practical example for military leaders, to assist them in achieving their ultimate objective - victory. These practical examples from history and an education on the tenets of Operational Leadership, accomplished under a stressful regimen, can better guarantee success in tomorrow's conflicts.

Preface

Military leaders of today find that they must conduct their business in an environment which is dominated by Military Operations Other Than War. Therefore, it is incumbent upon them to give greater attention to the study of leadership. Intuition and military superiority alone, will not ensure success. The study of Operational Leadership illuminates those values and attributes that contribute to victory. Further, education and an understanding of history best determines the lessons the Operational Commander should consider in preparing for hostilities.

Admiral Stockdale wrote, “Education is an ornament in prosperity, and a refuge in adversity”. Few wars are fought by the Operational Commander in which he experiences one successive victory after another. Instead, he typically faces constant adversity, struggling with one challenge after another. Education in the Art of Operational Leadership is a necessity for the present and future Operational Commander. Particularly, an education in the Principles of Operational Leadership which is further refined under stressful academic situations in and out of the classroom.

Aristotle notes that it is possible to reason correctly from false premises, thus coming up with logically correct, but untrue conclusions. An Operational Commander who possesses the precise knowledge of the Principles of Operational Leadership, and who uses these precepts wisely and correctly, can better ensure success in tomorrow’s conflicts and avoid the hazards produced from false suppositions.

This paper’s approach towards Operational Leadership provides: a) The Principles of Operational Leadership; b) Historical examples of Operational Leadership which are just

as valuable as the principles, and; c) Describes how the Principles of Leadership and lessons from history must be cultivated within a stressful academic regiment. To do this we will briefly explore three dissimilar battles during the Civil War involving General Ulysses S. Grant. These battle's will be used as an historical setting to review Grant's performance in Operational Leadership. Towards the end, we will draw some conclusions from the lessons of history and the principles provided, and offer some recommendations for today's and tomorrow's Operational Commander.

Thesis

An examination of history reveals that good and competent men in leadership positions sometimes make poor decisions, while others choose correctly. Independent analysis of past operational decisions often shows the legitimate course of action. So, why did some choose with clarity, while others remained myopic? Is there a fog of life that gets in the way of decision making? If so, can an understanding of the Principles of Operational Leadership assist the Operational Commander to “see through the fog”?

I submit that every distinguished Operational Leader has been formed by the test of the crucible. Therefore, we must cultivate leadership characteristics in a stressful academic environment, prior to being tested on the field of battle. Coincident with this approach must be the study of Operational Leadership through education and an understanding of history. This avenue imparts the lessons the Operational Commander should consider in preparing for any conflict and allows the Operational Leader to see “through the fog”.

I propose that the Operational Commander’s attention to the Principles of Operational Leadership, enhanced by education under a stressful regimen, will provide a greater degree of success in any operational endeavor. An Operational Commander who possesses the explicit knowledge of the Principles of Operational Leadership and who uses these maxims skillfully can better guarantee success in tomorrow’s contest.

The Principles of Operational Leadership

Professor Vego defines leadership as the “influencing of people to work toward the accomplishment of a common objective.”¹ In other words, a leader is one who mobilizes others towards a goal shared by both leader and follower. Although the soldier on the

forward edge of the battle area is just as likely to encounter moments that require leadership as the one he serves, our concern is with the leadership of the commander and his effectiveness at the operational level. This evaluation of an Operational Commander's leadership performance is a value judgment of his competence in decision making. Decision making refers to the direction chosen to achieve a common objective. The study of Operational Leadership is concerned with the practical decisions of the commander and his ability to translate national strategy into operational objectives. Some Operational Leadership examples of decision making responsibilities are: informing politicians when national strategy and military objectives are misaligned; ensuring national strategic objectives are translated into appropriate military action; ensuring mobilization is properly planned and executed and; providing for the education and training of military forces.

The most important aspects of a successful Operational Leader are character and integrity. The Operational Commander possessing such attributes would exhibit some or all of the following: toughness, decisiveness, independence, courage, self-reliance, self-confidence, and imagination. In addition, he would display a willingness to assume responsibility and take risks.

The Operational Commander must develop operational thinking and the ability to anticipate future events. This requires Operational Vision. Operational Vision involves the discernment of how best to employ one's forces to achieve the stated objectives. In the face of impediments, an Operational Commander must retain his Operational Vision.

One avenue to the understanding of Operational Leadership is through the study of great men in history. We have briefly discussed Operational Leadership in theory and

propose to study leaders in action. The preceding approach allows us to reflect on philosophical concepts, whereas the study of history permits an empirical review provided by historical fact. We are concerned with trying to assess the most important characteristics of Operational Leadership. Those attributes we find will show the Operational Leader as a unifier, harmonizer and coalition builder. He will display the courage to make decisions, vice simply expressing opinions. This is an important distinction, for a decision requires others to stand up and make choices. Decisions require judgment. Judgment itself requires a synthesis of facts, events and trends to make a coherent decision. To be able to communicate a decision effectively requires simplicity and clarity. All notable Operational Leaders retain these attributes. In truth, there are many different styles of Operational Leadership, which are forged by the varying challenges and historical periods encountered. A brief review and critique of General Grant's Operational Leadership through a "window of history," will provide a practical example for today's and tomorrow's leaders.

Operational Leadership in Practice

General Grant at Fort Donelson (12-16 February 1862)

Fort Donelson, Tennessee, is remembered by the writers of history for several reasons. It was the site of the first major Confederate defeat in the Civil War and signaled the first step toward the Confederate's loss of the West. In addition, it introduced a nation to the future commanding general of the Union Army. It is not our purpose to dissect, blow by blow, the battle at Fort Donelson, but to recall the Operational Leadership and decision making of Grant and his adversaries. To do this, we must first have a basic understanding of what transpired.

The Civil War had spread west and both armies were struggling for control of Missouri. At this time, the South was clearly gaining control over the region. Thus, the operational objective for Grant and his army was to cut the Confederates in half by separating the Mississippi from St. Louis, all the way to the Gulf. To accomplish this, Grant planned to attack the Confederates, via Fort Donelson, the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers.²

Fort Donelson was located on the Cumberland River and presented a formidable task to Grant. Grant ascertained that Fort Donelson's capture would cut the Confederates from the main body of the South, hold Kentucky firmly in the Union, and make it difficult for Tennessee to cooperate with other Confederate states.

At Fort Donelson, Grant's Operational Leadership style emerged. This pattern in Grant's leadership style was that he always thought more about what he planned to do to the enemy than what the enemy might do to him. This offensive nature brought him to near disaster more than once.³ In addition to his aggressive tendency, Grant never lost sight of the operational objective, even when faced with overwhelming odds. His hallmark was his ability to remain fixed in the resolution to undertake any movement against any objective, no matter what the cost. In battle, Grant went about quietly issuing orders in a conversational tone. Such stoicism inspired his subordinates and gave them courage. In the war councils he never lost his temper.⁴ At one point in the engagement at Fort Donelson, Grant discovered a near disaster about to occur to his right flank. In his typical quiet voice he directed his officers, "Gentlemen, the position on the right must be retaken."⁵ The counter-attack was so successful that Grant's operational reserves never had to be used.

Grant refused be tied to institutional arrangements or war fighting paradigms. Fort Donelson first displayed Grant's understanding of Joint Operations. With the support of flag-officer Andrew H Foote, Grant had arranged a joint assault on Fort Donelson. Grant recognized the synergistic effect brought about by the use of the Navy along the Cumberland, combined with his forces ashore.

Fort Donelson introduced the nation to a general who displayed an abundance of personal and moral courage, offensive inclination, and an appreciation for Joint Operations. This was significant, since the inconsistency in war fighting principles among Union generals was so lacking that Operational Leadership weighed more heavily than any strategy. Fortunately, the Union had at last found a general who possessed the leadership aptitude to lead the Union to victory.

Before concluding, it is worth a momentary look at Grant's opposition at Fort Donelson. General Albert Sidney Johnston was in charge of the Confederates in the west. In this period he was faced with fighting the Union Army for Nashville as well as Fort Donelson. Torn between defending and abandoning the fort, Johnston took a middle course by dividing his men between the two fronts. This operational decision was the beginning of the events which led to disaster for the Confederates at Fort Donelson. At Fort Donelson, Johnston entrusted the operation to three generals, John B. Floyd, Gideon J. Pillow, and Simon B. Buckner. Floyd was the ranking officer but was currently under indictment by a grand jury in Washington for complicity in an embezzlement of public funds while Secretary of War under President James Buchanan. Such an event undoubtedly exercised influence over him and clouded his judgment. Pillow had a superb military record, but was known to

be jealous by nature, quarrelsome, and, worst of all, insubordinate. The junior of the three was Buckner. Although subordinate in rank, he was the most capable of the three, possessing courage, tactical knowledge and military bearing. Most impressive was his ability to inspire his subordinates with confidence. It is enough for our purposes to witness the three generals in the final hours at Fort Donelson.

Buckner accurately understood that one of the operational objectives in the defense of Fort Donelson had been to cover the movement of Johnston from Bowling Green to Nashville. Now that Johnston's army had arrived safely in Nashville, Buckner felt that he could not successfully resist any further assault by Grant's vastly superior force. Therefore, he was of the opinion that continued defense of the fort risked the destruction of the entire force. Pillow and Floyd agreed. At this point it would have been customary for the commanding general to seek terms for surrender with the opposing general.⁶ Instead, Floyd relinquished command to Pillow, and Pillow to Buckner. Pillow, who had always held himself in high regard, had previously proclaimed "liberty or death" as his motto. When push came to shove, Pillow chose liberty and escaped across the river with Floyd under the cover of darkness. Buckner, disgusted by this cowardly act, chose to share the fate of his men.⁷ Thus, it became Buckner's responsibility to seek terms with Grant. Grant responded with his now famous, "No terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted."⁸ From this moment on U.S. Grant would be known as "Unconditional Surrender" Grant.

Grant's adversaries provide a few lessons for students of Operational Leadership. Johnston's Operational Decision Making was flawed in that he violated the principle of

concentration of forces. In assigning three generals to the fort, he created an immediate problem with regard to Unity of Command and Effort. This operational blunder was further exacerbated by Floyd's inferior soldiering and Pillow's penchant for insubordination. In addition we are witness to a complete lack of moral and personal courage in Floyd and Pillow. Buckner is the lone and shining example of a competent leader for the Confederates at Fort Donelson. Unfortunately for the South, the North had found a fighting general and a true leader in "Unconditional Surrender" Grant.

General Grant at the Battle of Shiloh (6-7 April 1862)

Grant's victory at Fort Donelson opened the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers to Union warships. Continuing his joint operations with the Navy, Grant proceeded up the Tennessee River to Pittsburgh Landing. Grant's eventual operational objective was the vital railroad intersection at Corinth, 22 miles away, which lay astride the Confederacy's only complete east-west railway line. Grant astutely recognized this as a decisive point for the Confederates. As a result the South, under Johnston, concentrated its forces for an attack on Grant. The Confederates planned to attack Grant around Shiloh Methodist Church, cut him off from his lines of communication to Pittsburgh Landing, and force him into the swamps.

Grant, ever concerned with his next move and disregarding that of his enemy, believed he would have to march to Corinth to fight Johnston. Hence, on the night of 5 April, he made his first error in Operational Decision Making. Grant failed to provide for the protection of his own forces by not issuing orders to patrol and picket his perimeter. Consequently, the Confederate attack came as a complete surprise on the morning of the 6th of April. For the Union soldiers the shock of the attack was too much, and a rout was

underway. Johnston at the front, rallying his troops onward to victory, was killed.

Confederate General Beauregard was called upon to take his place. Despite the apparently hopeless situation for the North, Grant was able to establish a final defensive line that was well chosen for its terrain advantage over the attacking enemy. As evening approached, Beauregard sensed that his own army was approaching its culminating point and thus did not order a final assault against Grant. With the advantage of terrain and the use of tactical fires from the gunboats, the North was able to finally make a stand.

With an apparent victory all but assured, Beauregard believed that the next day would simply be a “mopping up” operation.⁹ Grant on the other hand was preparing to turn defeat into victory. Although his staff advised retreat, Grant planned for a counter-attack. Grant’s retort to his officer corps was, “Retreat? No. I propose to attack at daylight and whip them.”¹⁰

The next morning, Grant awakened Beauregard with a surprise of his own. The Union troops advanced on a broad front, using superior numbers and a concentration of artillery and gunboat fire to defeat the Confederates. It was too much for Beauregard, who ordered a retreat. The battle of Shiloh was decisive, and any Confederate hope of regaining control of Nashville and western Tennessee was abandoned. This operational victory for Grant had strategic consequences, for it had denied the South’s bid for prominence in the west. The South’s influence in the region was on the decline, as a result of Grant’s operations.

Grant’s fame at Fort Donelson was short lived and he was heavily criticized for not being prepared for the Confederate surprise attack on the morning of 6 April. Such criticism

was warranted, for Grant had been preoccupied with his own movements and ignored those of his adversary. By this time, however, Grant had earned an ally in President Lincoln who silenced the criticism of Grant with, “I can’t spare this man, he fights.”¹¹ In any case, it was because of Grant’s composure in the fog of war and his unwavering commitment to unceasingly attack the enemy that Grant was able to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

General Grant at The Wilderness (5-6 May 1864)

Our final case study explores Grant’s Operational Leadership as the Commander of the entire Union Army. His first test in battle as the Union’s military leader was against General Robert E. Lee, the Confederate’s foremost and most beloved general.

Upon his arrival in the east, Grant’s first orders were for the concurrent advancement of all key Union Armies. In the same way that Grant had recognized the value of Joint Operations, he also recognized the importance of engaging the enemy simultaneously on several different fronts. With a Unity of Command and Effort not observed in other generals of the Northern Army Grant used sequencing and synchronization against the Confederates. While the Northern armies in the past had operated independently of each other and without an all encompassing strategy or objective, Grant’s vision was to coordinate advances on several fronts with a single strategic objective. Such simultaneous movements were meant to prevent any one of the Southern forces from reinforcing the other. Having earlier recognized that victory for the North would not be realized until the Southern army was annihilated, Grant articulated the strategic objective to General Meade this way, “Lee’s army will be your objective point. Wherever Lee goes, there will you go also.”¹² Grant’s vision of victory as the Commander of the Northern Army was expressed, simply and clearly.

The Wilderness was a patch of woods some twelve miles wide and six miles deep along the south bank of the Rapidan River and ten miles west of Fredericksburg, Virginia. This stretch of land shaped the strategies of both Operational Leaders. Grant viewed the Wilderness as something to be crossed, with the least possible delay. For Lee, the Wilderness would assist him negating the enemy's numerical superiority.

Union plans to clear the Wilderness on the first day were thwarted almost immediately. After a savage day of fighting, neither side had much to show for their efforts other than exorbitant casualties. At first light the next day, in characteristic fashion, Grant attacked. Again, after a day of ferocious battle, both armies' efforts ended in a stalemate.

Grant's efforts had been directed toward forcing back Lee's advance in order to complete a maneuver that would place his army between Lee and Richmond. Lee's effort had been to strike Grant's army a decisive blow, in order to force it from his advance. Both attempts failed. What little advantage had been gained from two days of fighting remained with the Confederates.¹³

In previous engagements, the North's officers and men had become accustomed to being directed by their superiors to retreat to the nearest safe haven and reconstitute forces. Hence, the Northern Army expected the same to transpire after the battle of the Wilderness. Grant's former exploits and his proclivity to remain on the offensive was yet to be experienced by the Union Army in the East. Prior to the Wilderness, Grant had told President Lincoln, "Whatever happens, there will be no turning back." Consequently, Grant prepared to march around Lee's right during the night to seize the crossroads village of Spotsylvania to the south.¹⁴ Despite heavy losses, Grant ordered his army onward. For the

first time in the Civil War experience, Lee faced an adversary who had the determination to press on, in defiance of the cost. For the first time in a Virginia campaign, the Army of the Potomac stayed on the offensive after its initial battle.¹⁵ The moment of truth came in the Wilderness. Grant's decision to forge on against Lee marked the beginning of the end for the Confederacy.¹⁶

In February 1862, the nation had first caught a glimpse of Grant's rising star. In May 1864, after almost two and a half years on the battlefield, Grant met his most capable adversary. What he knew and had previously learned, he brought to force against Lee and his army. Why Grant was successful is worth a second look, and says much regarding his Operational Leadership, Decision Making and Vision.

The Lessons Observed Through a Window of History

The first lesson for current and future Operational Leaders is Grant's ability to break loose from institutional paradigms and tenets. Unfettered with the common fixations of his contemporaries, Grant was able to view warfare from a new perspective. Instead of pursuing the fortunes of a single battle, he viewed his campaign as a series of events to be used to achieve the ultimate objective. Despite victory or defeat, Grant consistently pursued his strategic and operational objectives. He refused to be diverted from his goal despite the fog of war. At Shiloh, while Grant failed at certain aspects of generalship, he retained the stubborn tenacity to stand firm against serious setbacks.¹⁷

Because Grant was liberated from the Napoleonic vision of battle, he was able to consider novel approaches against his enemy. Grant prided himself on what he considered one of his most important innovations, cutting loose from his lines of communication and

living off the land.¹⁸ As a consequence, the enemy often became too preoccupied with trying to cut nonexistent lines of communication. In addition to this new approach, Grant's introduction of Joint Warfare and the synchronization of simultaneous fronts, illustrated a new form of warfare not previously encountered by the South.¹⁹

Forcing Lee to spread his scarce resources on several different fronts, made him increasingly vulnerable to Grant's Principle of Concentration and Mass. Grant was the first of the Northern generals to adopt a strategy of annihilation. Displaying an analytical mind and creative imagination, Grant knew that the philosophical approach of the North must be one of perpetual aggressiveness, and that Lee's army was the center of gravity. It is often easy for an Operational Commander to lose touch with his original vision in the face of setbacks and losses.²⁰ Grant was never distracted by the highs and lows produced by war. Instead he displayed an uncanny ability to keep his ultimate objective constantly in view.²¹

Grant stands as an icon to current and future Operational Leaders. But does he provide a standard of measure too difficult to attain? Perhaps. But the lessons are clear: 1) Ensure Operational Designs are engraved with tenacity of purpose, originality and ingenuity; 2) Utilize the powers of invention vice adaptation; 3) Insist upon cooperation between commands to ensure operations of Joint Maneuvers are in concert with a comprehensive plan; 4) Cultivate the individuality of subordinates to inspire imagination; 5) Remain calm amid the excitement of battle, whether in the ecstasy of victory or the despair brought about by defeat. Such a demeanor will instill confidence in subordinates and help preserve their focus on the Operational Vision; 6) Cultivate a Will to Action by subordinates inspired by a display of physical and moral courage; 7) Develop a sense of detachment, which in turn will

promote self-reliance and self-confidence, allowing one to be decisive regarding issues of a critical nature.

These lessons from history are but one way to educate current and future Operational Leaders. They provide graphic examples of success and failures encountered in the fog of war. Yet the lessons of history are not enough. How to train and educate better Operational Leaders is the next discussion.

Seeing Through the Fog of Life

Operational Leadership Through Education, Habit and Practice

If the study of history alone is not enough to produce exceptional Operational Leadership traits, how might one achieve such a lofty pinnacle? Aristotle offers an answer in an indirect way: “Neither by nature nor contrary to nature do the moral excellencies arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and made perfect by habit”.²² In other words, the study of history can sow the seeds of leadership, but they must now be watered and made to grow through the habit and practice of the virtues of Operational Leadership. Once aware of the virtues, one can make a conscious effort to inculcate them into everyday life. In other words one must practice leadership. The first step is ensuring we are men of character and integrity. We cannot hope to lead a group of subordinates who are virtuous, without first becoming virtuous ourselves. Admiral Stockdale believes the best way to practice the virtues of Operational Leadership is inside the hermetic seal of life.²³ By this he meant practicing leadership under the intense pressures normally brought about by life and the responsibilities of command.

Stockdale contends that a leader properly educated in history knows that the calamities one encounters in battle are not peculiar to himself. Thus, he avoids the self-indulgent error of seeing himself in a predicament so unprecedented, so rare, as to justify his making an exception to law, custom, or morality in favor of himself.²⁴ In other words, the challenges of Operational Leadership are not new. Nevertheless, the lessons of history provide a grim reminder to the Operational Commander that the failure to exercise competent leadership can result in the slaughter of brave men, struggles lost and the fall of nations.²⁵

In practicing Operational Leadership we must embrace stress. It is essential to leadership. Exercising Operational Decision Making in the face of constant pressure is necessary to become an effective Operational Leader. A leader's ability to maintain control amid the pandemonium allows him to prevail.²⁶ The ability to cultivate a will to action is a characteristic of the leader who can improvise under pressure. Through practice, and under stressful situations, the Operational Commander can maintain his Operational Vision regardless of the dilemma. In short, pressure must be a constant companion. If the ability to act decisively, with clarity of purpose and vision, can be taught and practiced, it must be done under a stressful discipline.²⁷

The crucible of pressure must be taught and practiced in our classrooms as well as our operating environments. From the service academies to the cockpits and decks of our ships, we must bring about a learning environment that is both stimulating and demanding. Stockdale notes, "Once one learns to accommodate the shocks of a stressful existence, his adrenaline, will power, and imagination, are going to start churning to provide the maximum performance of the human mind."²⁸ Operating under pressure over long periods of time

provides the Operational Leader the ability to endure. For Plato, "Courage is endurance of the soul."²⁹ The Greeks admired those leaders who could best operate under pressure. "On the battlefield," says Aristotle, "the greatest pressure is fear of death, and the temptation is to run away. But the courageous man holds on."³⁰

Can we practice and teach Operational Leadership in an unstressful environment? Of course we can. But the results will be less than our nation deserves. A stressful environment for our Operational Leaders spurs a growth in character, integrity and self-confidence that could not be created in an otherwise permissive environment. Few wars are fought in such benign circumstances, therefore we can not expect to practice, educate, or train our leaders in an enervated environment, and then expect them to perform valiantly in stressful ones.

Aristotle asserts,

There are some instances when a man acts improperly under a strain greater than human nature can bear and which no one could endure. Yet there are perhaps also acts which no man could possibly be compelled to do, but rather than do them he would accept the most terrible suffering and death.³¹

Conclusion

Leadership will always be a struggle. It is in the essence of leadership. It is where leadership gets its birth. Every great leader the world has ever known was produced out of opposition. Leadership is a contest between wills, one leading, the other following. Those who are most successful are the ones who can cultivate a *will to action*.³²

Carl Von Clausewitz wrote that the nature of war is essentially irrational.³³ Therefore, as Operational Leaders, it is our responsibility to make rational that which is inherently irrational. As discussed, we do that by cultivating a will to action toward a common objective by maintaining the Operational Vision. History has shown that this is

easier said than done. In war, something is always going wrong, and once that happens (as it is bound to), it is easy for everything to go wrong. Grant was a leader who could see through the fog of war. Unaffected by the friction or fog of life and war, he was able to direct his army, always seeing clearly what must be done, what must be abandoned or altered, as things went incessantly wrong.³⁴

Operational Leaders will be most successful when they accept that they will always operate within the fog and friction of war. Realizing they will regularly fight in a fog, they will be free to act more swiftly, putting the heavier burden of the unexpected on the enemy.³⁵

How is one to become a great Operational Leader? The following summary provides a good beginning: 1) Strive for more education. A good education can best determine the rules you should live by.³⁶ As Sir William Francis Butler once observed, “The nation that will insist on drawing a broad line of demarcation between the fighting man and the thinking man is liable to find its fighting done by fools and its thinking done by cowards;”³⁷ 2) Study the great leaders of history which provides the foremost instruction in leadership. A study of leaders in action, coupled with thoughtful reflection and an empirical review of the historical facts, provide the most important lessons. Learn how past great Operational Leaders thought and acted and institute those characteristics into your own life, by way of habit and practice. There are no born Operational Leaders. Leadership traits must be developed both in yourself and in your subordinates; 3) Practice the attributes of Operational Leadership within stressful environments; 4) Become a person of character and integrity. One cannot expect to lead followers who possess such virtues, without possessing them yourself; 5) Provide simple and clear objectives and priorities to subordinates. This helps maintain stability under

pressure, and promotes the retention of the original vision; 6) Be courageous in making decisions. Act decisively. One cannot wait for all the information to make an informed decision. To do so risks making the right decision, but too late to be effective; 7) Develop a tendency to be unorthodox and creative.

Life rarely confronts the Operational Leader with the challenges he desires, so it should come as no surprise that he will not encounter a war tailor made to his strengths and weaknesses. Regrettably, it is all too normal for some aspiring leaders to believe that history can be overcome and that future events can be shaped by their very greatness. This seduction of power can hide the truth and cause one to mistakenly believe that he can fight any war on his own terms. The successful leader knows that leadership, like war, demands careful study and analysis and must be practiced under the crucible.

The successful leader knows that past error is no excuse for its perpetuation and that failure is a tool to be used to gain wisdom. Antigone of Sophocles said, "All men make mistakes, but a good man yields when he knows his course is wrong , and repairs the evil. The only sin is pride."³⁸

NOTES

¹ Vego, Milan, "Operational Leadership," Unpublished Research Paper, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 1996, 1.

² Bradford, Ned, ed., Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (New York: Penguin Books Inc., 1989), 60.

³ McPherson, James M., Battle Cry of Freedom (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 400.

⁴ Bradford, 65.

⁵ Ibid., 77.

⁶ Ibid., 80.

⁷ McPherson, 40.

⁸ Ibid., 411.

⁹ Ibid., 412.

¹⁰ Ibid., 410.

¹¹ Ibid., 414.

¹² Ibid., 722.

¹³ Bradford, 479.

¹⁴ McPherson, 726.

¹⁵ Ibid., 728.

¹⁶ Kennedy, Frances H., ed., The Civil War Battlefield Guide (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990), 206.

¹⁷ Weigley, Russell F., The American Way of War (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company Inc., 1973), 139.

¹⁸ Ibid., 140.

¹⁹ In truth, the Confederate Army routinely used this method of warfare; while the North prior to Grant, had displayed no propensity to do so.

²⁰ Vego, 3.

²¹ Weigley, 141.

²² Stockdale, James B., Military Ethics (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1987), 246.

²³ Ibid., 226.

²⁴ Ibid., 38.

²⁵ Ibid., 82.

²⁶ Ibid., 225.

²⁷ Ibid., 226.

²⁸ Ibid., 227.

²⁹ Ibid., 229.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 246-247.

³² Wills, Garry, Certain Trumpets: The Call of Leaders (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 11.

³³ Ibid., 86.

³⁴ Ibid., 87.

³⁵ Ibid., 100.

³⁶ Stockdale, 222.

³⁷ Toner, James H., "Teaching Military Ethics," Military Review, May 1993, 17.

³⁸ Kennedy, Robert F., Promises to Keep (Kansas City, MO: Hallmark Cards, Inc., 1969), 39.

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